



Environmental Bulletin

Volume 13, Number 16
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from the Savannah River Site

Public Invited to Comment

Local Meeting Planned for Proposed Modern Pit Facility

The Department of Energy's (DOE's) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced on September 23, 2002 its intent to prepare a Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Stockpile Stewardship and Management for a Modern Pit Facility. This Notice is a major step forward in carrying out recommendations to develop a modern capability to manufacture plutonium pits. Pit production was shut down in 1989 at the Rocky Flats Plant, and no pits have been produced since. The NNSA's strategy calls for a new facility to be in production by approximately 2020.

The United States is the only nuclear power without the capability to manufacture a plutonium pit, a critical component of a nuclear weapon that functions as a trigger to allow a modern nuclear weapon to function. A new facility would reestablish the capability to manufacture all pit types in the Nation's current nuclear stockpile and meet any future requirements in an environmentally compliant manner.

This action supports a recommendation in the Bush Administration's Nuclear Posture Review, which states that the ability to produce pits is important to ensure the future viability of the Nation's nuclear deterrent. The lack of pit production capability has also been identified as a critical defense readiness gap by Congress, the Department of Defense and outside experts, including the Chiles Commission and the Foster Panel.

This Supplement to the Programmatic EIS will support two decisions: (1) whether to proceed with a Modern Pit Facility; and (2) if so, where to locate it. Five potential locations will be evaluated in the EIS: (1) Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) at Los Alamos, New Mexico; (2) Nevada Test Site, north of

Las Vegas, Nevada; (3) Pantex Plant at Amarillo, Texas; (4) Savannah River Site at Aiken, South Carolina; and (5) the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant at Carlsbad, New Mexico. The EIS will also evaluate the no-action alternative of maintaining current plutonium pit capabilities at LANL, and the reasonableness of upgrading the existing facilities at LANL to increase pit production capacity.

NNSA is inviting comments related to its intention to prepare this Supplemental Programmatic EIS. Comments should be submitted within 60 days and can be mailed to Mr. Jay Rose, Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy/NNSA, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. Comments may also be faxed to 1-202-586-5324, or e-mailed to James.Rose@nnsa.doe.gov.

Public meetings to discuss issues and receive comments on the scope of this EIS will be held in the vicinity of site alternatives, as well as in Washington, D.C. The public scoping meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to present comments, ask questions, and discuss issues with NNSA representatives regarding this EIS.

Local Meeting Planned

All interested parties are invited to attend the SRS public scoping meeting

October 29, 2002

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

**North Augusta Community Center
495 Brookside Avenue
North Augusta, SC**

Current NEPA Actions Affecting SRS

- ***SRS High Level Waste Tank (HLW) Closure (DOE/EIS-0303)***

The proposed action is to close the SRS HLW Tanks in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, DOE Orders and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control permit requirements. The draft EIS was released in November 2000. Public meetings were held in January 2001. On May 24, 2002, the Final EIS was distributed to the public and filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A Record of Decision (ROD) on the Tank Closure EIS was signed August 9, 2002 (67 FR 53784, August 19, 2002). Copies of the EIS and ROD can be requested from Andrew R. Grainger at 1-800-881-7279 or e-mail: nepa@srs.gov. This EIS is complete and updates will not appear here in the future.

- ***Disposition of Metals That May Contain Residual Radioactivity (DOE/EIS-0327)***

This programmatic EIS will evaluate alternatives for disposition of scrap metals from DOE sites that may have been in radiological areas. The disposition options to be analyzed include continuation of the suspension on unrestricted release of metals for recycling, unrestricted release of scrap metals for recycling, and disposal. The Notice of Intent for this programmatic EIS was issued on July 12, 2001. Public meetings were held on July 31, 2001, in North Augusta, SC. The draft EIS is scheduled to be available in November 2002.

- ***Modern Pit Facility EIS (Supplement to Programmatic EIS for Stockpile Stewardship and Management, DOE/EIS-0236)***

This EIS will evaluate alternative sites (Los Alamos National Laboratory, Nevada Test Site, Pantex Plant, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, and Savannah River Site) for a Modern Pit Facility,

to provide the capability to manufacture plutonium (Pu) pits for the United States nuclear weapons stockpile. This EIS will be followed by a site-specific EIS to address the impacts of construction and operation of the Modern Pit Facility at the selected site. The draft EIS is scheduled to be available in the summer of 2003. (*See related story page1*)

- ***Supplement Analysis (SA), Changes Needed to the Surplus Plutonium Disposition Program (DOE/EIS-0283)***

The SA evaluates the impacts of making Pu feed for the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility from approximately 6.5 metric tons of Pu materials originally intended for Immobilization. The SA explains how these impacts have been addressed in the Storage and Disposition PEIS (DOE/EIS-0229) and the Surplus Plutonium Disposition EIS (DOE/EIS-0283). The SA and amended ROD are scheduled to be available in October 2002.

- ***Removal, Transportation and Storage of Radioisotopic Thermoelectric Generators (RTGs) (DOE/EA-1351)***

This programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) is being developed jointly by DOE and the U.S. Air Force. It addresses: (1) the removal and transportation of 10 Strontium-90 RTGs from Burnt Mountain Seismic Array Laboratory in Alaska to a DOE site or an Air Force facility; and (2) long-term storage of the 10 identified plus about 50 other RTGs. The PEA is on hold while an EM-1 policy review of Greater than Class C waste is being conducted.

See page 3 for more Current NEPA Actions

*Current NEPA Actions continued from
Page 2*

• ***Implementation of a Comprehensive Management Program for the Storage, Transportation, and Disposition of Potentially Re-Usable Uranium Materials (DOE/EA-1393)***

DOE-Oak Ridge (OR) has prepared a PEA to implement a comprehensive management program to safely, efficiently, and effectively store its potentially reusable low enriched uranium, normal uranium, and depleted uranium. The comprehensive management program addressed in this PEA looks at transportation, including preparation of uranium materials for safe shipment, long-term storage, and maintenance. The public comment period for the draft PEA ended June 21, 2002. Comments received are currently being considered for inclusion in a proposed final PEA. The DOE-OR decision to either issue a FONSI or notice of intent to prepare an EIS is projected for the fourth quarter of 2002.

• ***Natural Resources Management Activities at SRS (DOE/EA-0826)***

DOE-SR prepared an EA in 1993 to analyze the potential environmental impacts of continued management of SRS natural resources. Based on the analyses in the EA, DOE-SR determined the proposed action was not a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of NEPA, and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In 2000, DOE-SR issued a revised FONSI that determined implementation of a revised red-cockaded woodpecker Management Plan would have impacts no greater than those described in the 1993 EA. DOE-SR now proposes a second revised FONSI which will address minor differences between the 1991 and the next version of the SRS Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP). The NEPA review is on hold until the next version of the NRMP is finalized.

SRS Environmental Report Now Available

Copies of the Savannah River Site Environmental Report for 2001 are now available. This report highlights significant environmental programs and efforts at SRS and assesses the impact of site operations on the public and environment. This year's document is on a CD enclosed in a summary pamphlet.

Requests for copies of this report may be made by calling Mr. Jim Moore at 800-249-8155 or by e-mail to jim02.moore@srs.gov.

Citizens Advisory Board Meetings Scheduled

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), a nonpartisan independent group of citizens, provides informed and timely recommendations to DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency-Region IV (EPA) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) concerning decisions that affect SRS. Participation by the public is welcomed and encouraged. If you have any questions about any meeting location or agenda, call the Public Involvement Office at 800-249-8155.

Mark Your Calendar

CAB Quarterly Board Meeting
October 21-22, 2002
Charleston Riverview Hotel
Charleston, SC

CAB Combined Committees Meeting
November 12, 2002
Aiken Municipal Conference Center
Aiken, SC

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The SRS Environmental Bulletin

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